



# North Central Idaho News

CLEARWATER, IDAHO, LATAH, LEWIS & NEZ PERCE COUNTIES

## ECONOMIC TRENDS

Over the last six months, the north central Idaho labor market has been stable with very little decrease or increase. The good news is that stability is a welcome change from the significant job losses that had mounted up since 2002. The bad news is that north central Idaho is still not participating in job growth that the rest of the state has enjoyed. In looking at the future of the labor market, economic developers report companies are interested in the region because of its well trained labor pool but are having trouble finding existing buildings that fit their needs. Another concern that has stunted job growth has been the transportation system. Being Idaho's only seaport is a benefit but only if the roads to and from the port are adequate. The state's plans to improve the road system are under way, and roads in the future will be an asset instead of a disadvantage in economic development and labor market growth.

## AREA DEVELOPMENTS

### Clearwater County

- The state awarded almost \$5 million to four Idaho companies to extend broadband access to rural communities. The new initiative encourages private-sector investment in infrastructure to increase service delivery. Access to broadband is usually the first question asked by businesses interested in expanding into any community. Combined with the state funded grants and the dollar-for-dollar cash match from the companies, the \$9.8 million investment will finance 79 projects that will allow the companies to serve more than 50,000 potential new subscribers. Companies plan to provide affordable broadband service to rural communities by reducing up-front costs to the point that rural extensions are economically viable. Some of the projects and affected communities in the area are: First Step Internet – Weippe – grant for

North Central Idaho Table 1: Lewiston MSA Labor Force & Employment  
Nez Perce County, Idaho and Asotin County, Washington

	Jun 2006*	May 2006	Jun 2005	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
<b>INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE</b>					
<i>Seasonally Adjusted</i>					
Civilian Labor Force	28,750	28,670	29,280	0.3	-1.8
Unemployment	1,330	1,380	1,490	-3.6	-10.7
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.6	4.8	5.1		
Total Employment	27,420	27,290	27,790	0.5	-1.3
<i>Unadjusted</i>					
Civilian Labor Force	28,660	28,540	29,230	0.4	-2.0
Unemployment	1,240	1,160	1,380	6.9	-10.1
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.3	4.1	4.7		
Total Employment	27,420	27,380	27,850	0.1	-1.5
<b>JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK</b>					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs** - NAICS	26,990	27,050	27,270	-0.2	-1.0
<i>Goods-Producing Industries</i>	4,400	4,380	4,620	0.5	-4.8
Natural Resources & Mining	250	240	180	4.2	38.9
Construction	1,210	1,190	1,450	1.7	-16.6
Manufacturing	2,940	2,950	2,990	-0.3	-1.7
Wood Product Manufacturing	550	540	570	1.9	-3.5
Food Manufacturing	50	30	30	66.7	66.7
Paper Manufacturing	1,110	1,100	1,130	0.9	-1.8
Other Manufacturing	1,230	1,280	1,260	-3.9	-2.4
<i>Service-Providing Industries</i>	22,590	22,670	22,650	-0.4	-0.3
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	5,470	5,480	5,440	-0.2	0.6
Wholesale Trade	690	670	690	3.0	0.0
Retail Trade	3,430	3,480	3,480	-1.4	-1.4
Utilities	90	90	80	0.0	12.5
Transportation & Warehousing	1,260	1,240	1,190	1.6	5.9
Information	440	440	420	0.0	4.8
Financial Activities	1,830	1,830	1,800	0.0	1.7
Professional & Business Services	1,600	1,610	1,740	-0.6	-8.0
Education & Health Services	4,440	4,460	4,460	-0.4	-0.4
Leisure & Hospitality	2,400	2,340	2,580	2.6	-7.0
Other Services	1,120	1,120	1,130	0.0	-0.9
Government Education	2,440	2,530	2,320	-3.6	5.2
Government Administration	2,100	2,120	2,030	-0.9	3.4
Government Tribes	750	740	730	1.4	2.7

\*Preliminary Estimate

\*\*Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

\$10,975; Quest – grants for Cottonwood - \$61,800; Craigmont - \$37,100; Kooskia – \$522,400 and Lapwai - \$46,900.

### Idaho and Lewis counties

- The mill site on the edge of Craigmont has been purchased by Conrad Forest Products. The company is preparing the facility to house the myriad of lumber products Conrad offers to industrial, heavy construction and retail markets. The company treats about 100 million board feet a

year, more Douglas fir than any other company in the world. It has no plans to treat wood at the Craigmont site but will use it as a distribution center for its Idaho and eastern Washington customers. The site is the first in Idaho for the family based, employee-owned company headquartered in North Bend, Ore. The company also has treatment plants in Rainier, Ore., and Arbuckle, Calif. According to company officials, locating in Craigmont was simply a matter of looking at a map. The company was looking at expanding into new markets and better serving customers already in Boise, McCall and New Meadows as well as Spokane. The site was purchased from U.S. Timber Co., which purchased the property in 1997 from longtime mill operator Channel Lumber Co., which opened the mill in 1958. The mill last operated from 1999 to 2002. The company plans to use the existing buildings except for the old main office, which will be removed. Three local employees have been hired and will be joined by a salesperson, who has been employed with the company for a number of years.

- The new Grangeville Interagency Dispatch Center has come to life and will be the hub for fire suppression and observation on the Clearwater and Nez Perce national forests. For the first time, fire dispatching will be housed under one roof with the formation of the collaborative effort. Historically, each Forest Service district housed its own dispatcher, who could then call upon the Clearwater-Nez Perce fire zone dispatch to help if the fire got too big for the district to handle. In turn, the Idaho Department of Lands had its own dispatch at each of its district offices. Now they all work together at the new center in Grangeville. The Nez Perce and Clearwater forests and the Maggie Creek and Craig Mountain areas of state land were pooled then split into three districts: north, west and east. Each area is handled by dispatchers familiar with the landscape. The dispatchers at the new center handle more fires, especially when helping one of the other areas during high volume times. Working in the same room gives everyone a better feel of what is going on, said Linda Laing, aircraft dispatcher. She has worked as a dispatcher for years, the last 10 in the Clearwater-Nez Perce fire zone. Everyone in the office wears more than one hat. The dispatch center also supports other entities including the Clearwater-Potlatch Timber Protective Association based in Orofino and the Nez Perce Tribe.

#### Latah County

- This year's wheat crop has fewer heads of wheat, but the heads that are there are filling out just fine. Officials say the combination of a cold spring and a hot streak in May caused the soft white winter wheat to start diverting its energy from making multiple stocks to producing seed. That should lead to average or slightly less-than-average yields while the spring wheat should show average yields. The cold spring and heat wave helped control stripe rust, a disease that inhibits photosynthesis in the plant. The combination of cold

and the wheat heading early denied the rust an opportunity to establish itself on the plants. The region witnessed severe outbreaks over the last four years. This year the wheat market is strong. Red wheat is selling for \$6.04 a bushel once delivered to the coast. It has not crossed the \$6 mark since 2002. Soft white winter wheat is selling for \$3.90 a bushel compared to \$3.78 a year ago. Prices are expected to stay high due to drought conditions in the Midwest. But farmers are not dancing yet. Wheat prices may be up, but fuel prices continue to rise and could eat up the profits. And the continuous heat in late July will also affect harvest and yields.

- Three of the George F. Brocke and Son's grain elevators in Troy and two processing lines burned to the ground in July in a spectacular blaze. More than 60 firefighters were called in locally and from surrounding communities. The good news: They had insurance. Farmers will get paid for their crops. No one was injured. The workers will all keep their jobs. The worst of the flames are snuffed. And there are plans to rebuild. The bad news: The site is still smoldering, and the town continues to be shrouded in an acrid stench. According to fire fighting officials, it will be for an undetermined amount of time. Company spokesman, Bert Brocke said the company has made arrangements to store grain elsewhere for the pending harvest. The grain burned in the fire was from last year's harvest, and the company had been busy processing and transporting it before the fire broke out. "We're all right. It's just kind of poor timing," Brocke said. Four full-time employees worked at the elevators and all will be retained. Additional help may have to be hired to clean up the site, Brocke said. But the family said it is too early to say exactly when, how and where the company might erect new elevators.

#### Nez Perce and Asotin counties

- Lewiston's Urban Renewal Agency Board has settled on a budget of \$4.04 million for three city improvement projects. They are the North Lewiston waterline project, a downtown Lewiston parking project and a small piece within the Nez Perce Terrace for the Port of Lewiston Business and Technology Park. The projects are financed with 20-year bonds, which will be paid off with property taxes on any new construction or property value increases in the area since Jan. 1, 2005. Work on both the North Lewiston and downtown projects could start late this year or early next year.

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